

Paper PO-03

A Corporate SAS® Community of Support

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ABSTRACT

Many SAS users are not aware of an abundance of resources available to them from a variety of sources. The available resources range from those internal to their own organization to SAS itself. In order for these resources to be utilized they need to be available to the users in an accessible way. This paper shows how one large company with SAS users at many locations throughout the United States has built a highly successful collaborative community for SAS support. Modeled in the style of sasCommunity.org, the online corporate SAS community includes discussion forums, surveys, interactive training, places to upload code, tips, techniques, and links to documentation and other relevant resources that help users get their jobs done.

INTRODUCTION

WellPoint is one of the nation’s largest health benefits companies, serving 34 million members in its affiliated health plans and more than 65 million individuals through its subsidiaries. In this role, WellPoint works to develop and implement solutions that help improve the quality of health care, provide choice, expand coverage for consumers and help people live healthy lifestyles. By collaborating with physicians, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, pharmaceutical companies, technology providers and the government, WellPoint is forging partnerships necessary to deliver improved care and better health for consumers.

WellPoint’s over 37,000 employees distributed throughout the U.S. include a community of over 1,000 SAS users, also widely distributed geographically, including a number of offshore programmers. In addition, WellPoint SAS users run SAS on a variety of platforms, including PC SAS and SAS on Windows and Unix servers; the majority run SAS using the SAS/EG interface. Depending upon division of the company and data requirements, SAS business intelligence and web applications, e.g. SAS Web Report Studio and SAS BI Dashboard, are also licensed and available.

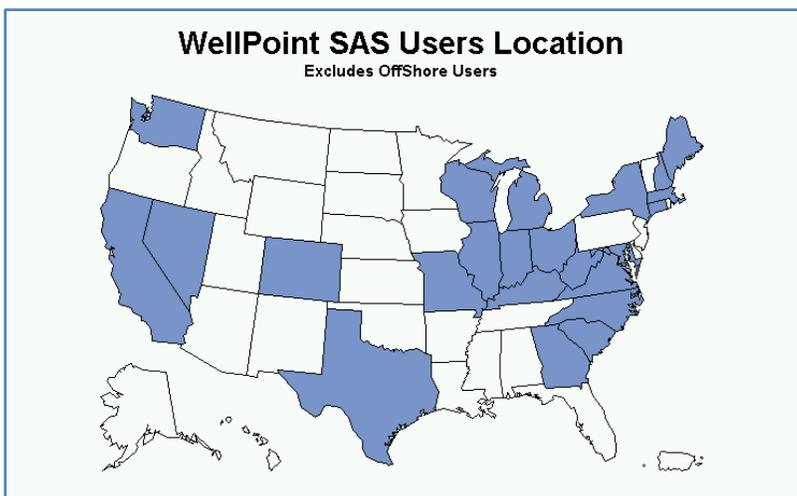


Figure 1. SAS User Geographic Distribution.

SAS use within WellPoint includes such varied tasks as data quality analysis, member risk stratification, client reporting, corporate financial analysis, and research and development. To support this broad spectrum of users and uses, WellPoint has developed a WellPoint SAS Community of Practice that assists in connections between these users in order to train staff, find answers, share technical knowledge and success stories, and collaborate on solutions that use SAS software products within the greater context of business intelligence.

Since the SAS applications used and the information to be shared include protected healthcare information (PHI), there are strict security limitations imposed on sharing this information. Protecting the confidentiality of member health, including their health financial information and individual privacy rights, is not only essential to a health insurance company for maintaining business, but is required by law. This requires much of the sharing between application users to take place within a secure environment and makes some of the newer social media tools like twitter and yammer that can only work outside controlled environments not applicable. This paper discusses and

illustrates several aspects of the Community of Practice that are especially valuable to the WellPoint user community. These include:

- SAS Wiki
- Discussion Forum
- SAS In-House User Group
- Training

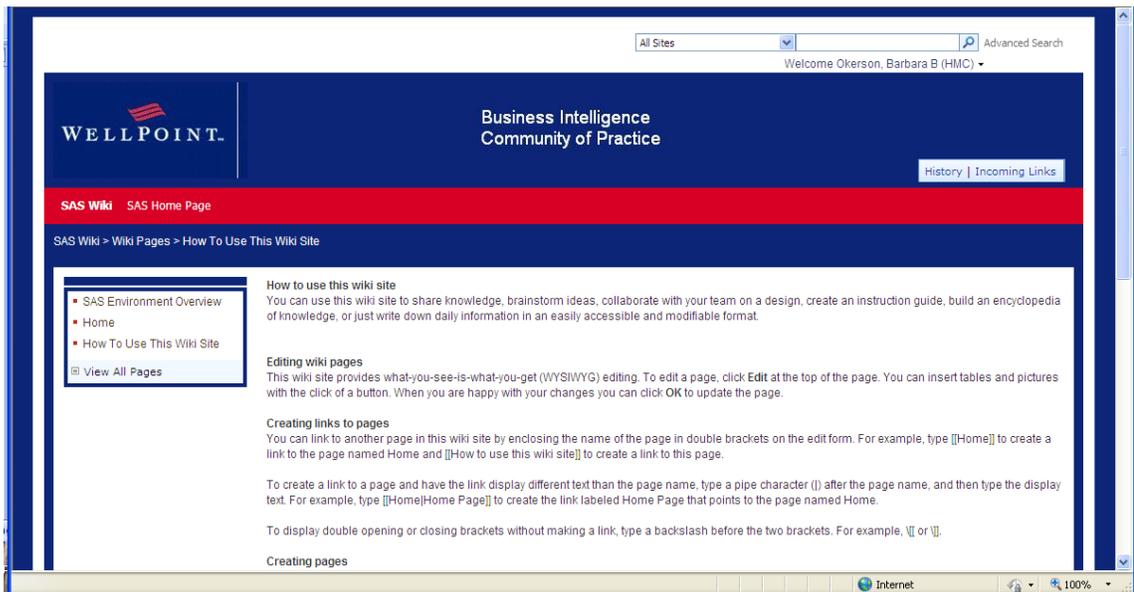
SAS WIKI

The term wiki comes from the Hawaiian *wikiwiki* which means quick or speedy. A wiki is a collection of Web pages designed to enable anyone with the appropriate access to the pages to contribute or modify the content of the pages. Wiki is a flexible, powerful and easy-to-use tool which facilitates collaboration within a community of users. The site grows organically by linking existing pages together or by creating links to new pages. If a user finds a link to an uncreated page, he or she can follow the link and create the page.

In business environments such as WellPoint, a wiki site provides a low-maintenance way to record knowledge. Information that is usually traded in e-mail messages, gleaned from hallway conversations, or written on paper can instead be recorded in a wiki site, in context with similar knowledge. Additionally, the wiki site can be used for idea brainstorming, collaborating on designs, creating an instruction guide, gathering data from the field, tracking call center knowledge, and building an encyclopedia of knowledge.

Within WellPoint, the SAS Community of Practice is a subgroup of a larger Business Intelligence Community of Practice that also includes a generic business intelligence group and groups for other applications. In this context, business intelligence is used as an umbrella term to include the people, processes, applications and tools used to organize and access information used to make and improve decisions and performance.

To get WellPoint employees comfortable working within wiki environments, WellPoint held wiki training and held wiki contests with prizes such as a \$25 gift certificate for the best contribution. Additional information on wiki navigation is available on each wiki site. The illustration below shows the main "How to Use the Wiki Site" page from the WellPoint SAS Wiki. Available within this site is a Quick Launch. This takes you to the wiki page library where you can manage the pages with all of the functionality of a Windows SharePoint Services document library.



Display 1. Entrance to WellPoint SAS Wiki.

Users can edit wiki pages, create links to pages, create new pages and manage their wiki site without web development skills. Whether the user is a seasoned SAS user within WellPoint with a variety of experiences to share or a newcomer looking to gain knowledge and interact with other users, the corporate SAS wiki provides a great environment for getting involved with knowledge exchange.

Editing wiki pages on the WellPoint SAS Community of Practice wiki site is straightforward.

- Editing is what-you-see-is-what-you-get (WYSIWYG).
- To edit a page, click **Edit** at the top of the page.
- Add text where desired
- Insert tables and pictures with the click of a button.
- When you are happy with your changes you can click **OK** to update the page.

For those users that want to do more complex editing, instructions are available as part of a power point presentation available on the Community of Practice SharePoint site. The screens below are pages from those instructions and provide information on changing fonts, creating hyperlinks, linking to other pages, and filtering wiki pages.

How to Edit in the Wiki Page

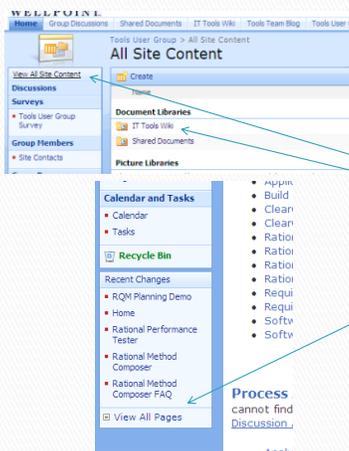
- ▶ Simple “rich text” editing
- ▶ Link to another page by putting the title in [[double brackets]]
- ▶ Only “owners” will have the ability to delete a page.
- ▶ Hyperlinking, Image embedding, html source code are available as well
- ▶ The Standard Font for this site is **Verdana Size 2**, Titles are size 3 and Bold



The screenshot shows a 'Delete Item' dialog box over a Wiki page. The page content includes a 'Tools technology' section and a '[[Tools Area]]' section. The '[[Tools Area]]' section contains a list of links: [[How To Use This Wiki Library]], [[What is a wiki site (what is a wiki site?)]], [[Application Developer]], [[Build Forge]], [[Clear-Case]], and [[ClearQuest]].

Filtering wiki pages

- ▶ Whole site list can be accessed from the Quick links bar on left of page either by clicking **All Site Content** then **IT Tools Wiki**
- ▶ –OR–
- ▶ From the wiki library clicking **View all Pages**



The screenshot shows the 'All Site Content' page. On the left, there is a 'Quick links bar' with options like 'All Site Content', 'Discussions', 'Surveys', 'Group Members', 'Site Contacts', 'Calendar and Tasks', 'Recycle Bin', and 'Recent Changes'. The 'All Site Content' section shows 'Document Libraries' with 'IT Tools Wiki' and 'Shared Documents', and 'Picture Libraries' with a list of items including 'Build', 'Clean', 'Ratiori', 'Requi', 'Softw', and 'Softw'. A message at the bottom says 'Process cannot find Discussion...'.

Display 2: Wiki Instructions

SAS DOCUMENTS

The SAS Wiki site includes several other sections with useful information for SAS users. The SAS Documents tab includes the following sections where WellPoint SAS users can contribute and share documents:

- Best Practices – includes templates for streamlining processes, job control and other best practices.
- Development – documents relating to process development in SAS.
- General – includes general SAS product and configuration information.
- How do I – documents from how to use the wiki to how to request SAS access.
- Support – information on migration from PC SAS to SAS EG and other support documents.
- Tips & Tricks – topically arranged tips for better SAS performance.
- Training – information about available training and location of training documents.

WEB APPLICATION LINKS:

The SAS Wiki site also includes links to the available SAS web applications. Web Report Studio and Information Delivery Portal are available in a production, user acceptance testing (UAT), and development (DEV) environment where as SAS stored processes and BI Dashboard are currently available only in the DEV environment.

EBI Web Application Links	
Production Environment Web Application	
•	Web Report Studio
•	Information Delivery Portal
UAT Environment Web Application	
•	Web Report Studio
•	Information Delivery portal
Dev Environment Web Application	
•	Web Report Studio
•	Information Delivery Portal
•	SAS Stored process
•	BI Dashboard

Display 3. Wiki Application Access.

OTHER:

Plans are for the WellPoint SAS wiki to continue to grow, but there is currently plenty of available content. Other currently available wiki pages include team discussion board areas, a communications area for relevant SAS event announcements, maintenance information area, links to SAS sites, user survey responses, and areas restricted for administrative users. Teams also have areas for tracking their team specific projects and tasks.

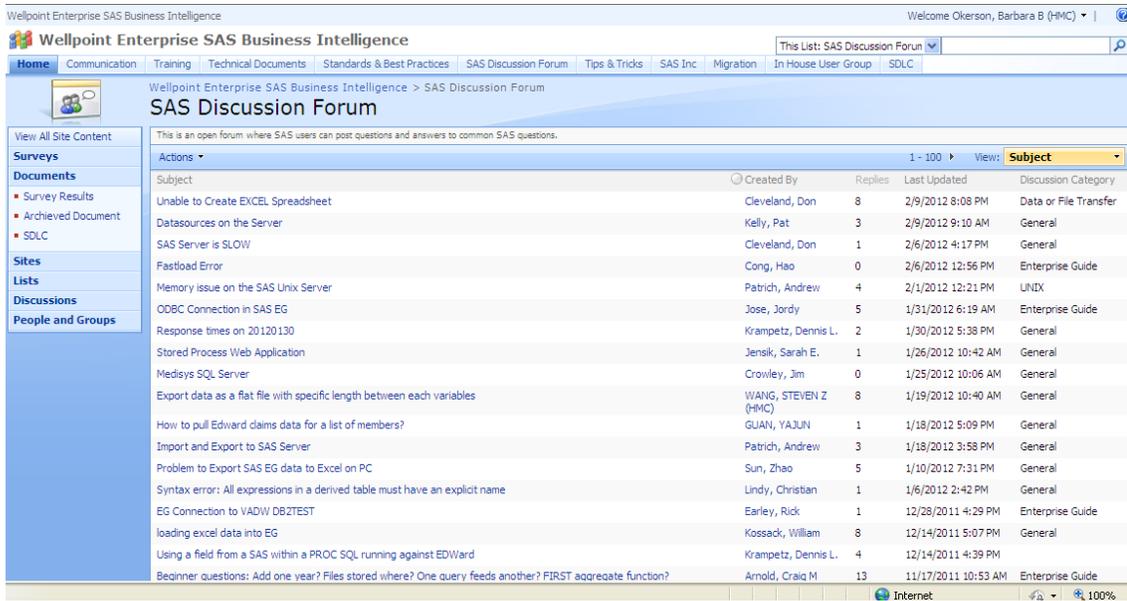
DISCUSSION FORUM

Discussion forums are ideal for information sharing in a technical setting. For a group like WellPoint SAS users that work in many different time zones, one advantage of a discussion forum is that users can participate at any time convenient to them. Participation can be passive or active. Because discussions are archived, users can search for and retrieve previous discussions on topics of current relevance to them. But the most important advantage is to be able to ask questions of users that have the same concerns, use the same data and databases, and work in the same environment where someone has likely had the same issue and has a solution to share.

The discussion forum is available through e-mail, including a weekly digest, and interactively through the SAS Community of Practice SharePoint site. It is also archived and searchable on the SharePoint site. Either on the SharePoint site or through e-mail, users can post discussion topics related to SAS which other discussion forum members can read and respond to, continuing the discussion. The site suggests that participants do the following:

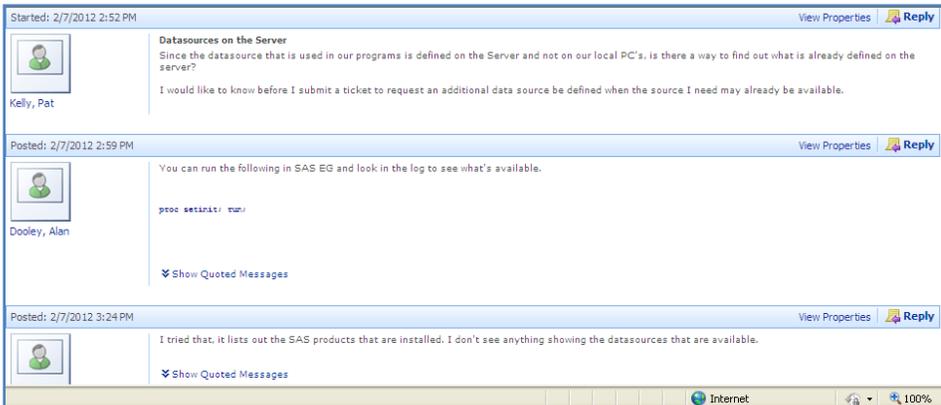
- Ask questions.
- Look out for other questions you may be able to answer.
- Enable e-mail reminders for discussion topics you want to follow.
- Create new discussion topics.

Here is a screen shot of the discussion forum showing the sortable subjects and categories. There are currently 215 open subjects to which WellPoint SAS users can reply.



Display 4. Discussion Forum Illustration.

The screen above references the original question (subject) for ongoing discussions. Clicking on the each item returns the item with all replies. The partial screen shot below illustrates this for the second item.



Display 5. Discussion Forum Drilldown.

SAS IN-HOUSE USER GROUP

A user group is an excellent way to increase value from shared corporate applications like the SAS System. This is true for both seasoned SAS software users and newcomers who'd like to interact with other users. In addition to networking with each other, users are exposed to new coding and analysis techniques while enhancing understanding of SAS software and service.

User groups like the WellPoint In-House SAS User Group that have registered with SAS receive many additional benefits. Here is some of what is available from SAS.

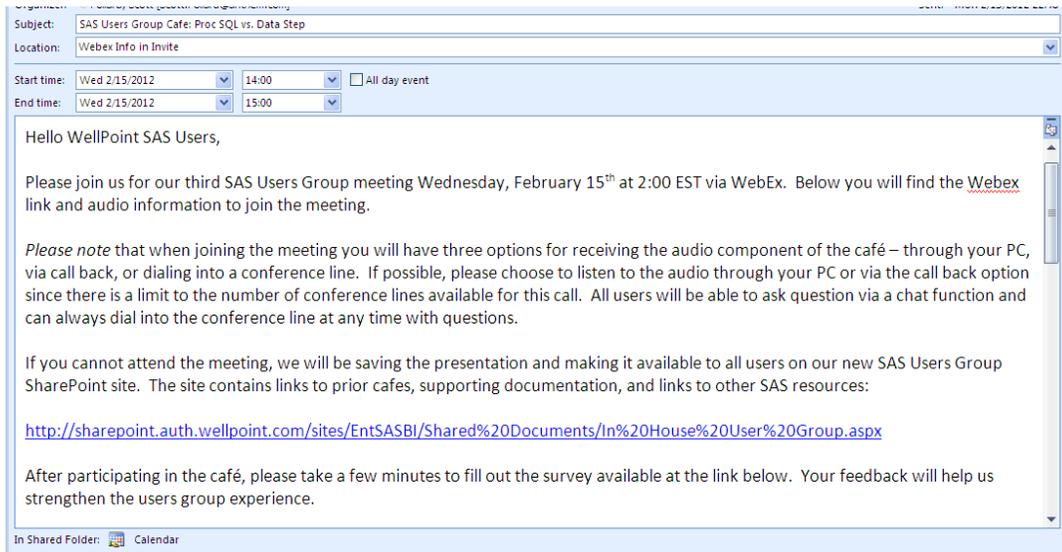
- User surveys
- SAS onsite speakers
- SAS virtual Speakers (via WebEx)
- SAS Press Speaker
- Books from SAS Publishing
- 20% Discount form for Publishing

- Giveaways
- Registered Group Logo

At WellPoint, SAS speakers currently are offering and presenting a monthly SAS Café. Attendance has been between 200 and 300 for each session. Because, due to work priorities and other interferences, it is understood that many members will be unable to attend all the offerings, the cafes themselves are recorded, including Q&A, and can be listened to anytime by clicking on a link on the WellPoint SAS Community of Practice SharePoint site. There is no expiration date. Topics presented by SAS for the last few months are listed below.

- How to create and deliver your SAS content efficiently...Make use of your macros
- Proc SQL vs. Data Step. Similarities, differences and when to use each
- In Database Processing

Meetings and cafés are announced by e-mail. The display below shows an invitation that was sent to the SAS users letting them know about the SAS café and that the content will be made available if they are unable to attend.



Display 6. SAS Café Invitation.

In addition to SAS presenters, WellPoint SAS users also share important information during these meetings. The user group planning committee is comprised of a SAS Institute liaison and members from several different divisions of WellPoint in order to represent the diversity of users and provide content that is meaningful. The graphic below illustrates the variation in SAS experience by attendee (from SAS Café attendee survey).

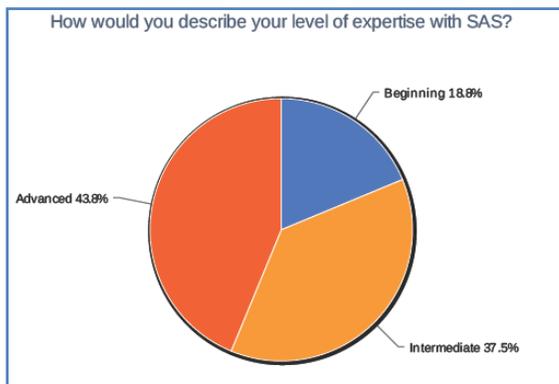


Figure 2. In-House User Group Attendee SAS Expertise.

In order to encourage submissions from SAS users, a template has been created to collect SAS success stories for sharing as part of the user group. Submissions can be posted to the SharePoint site. The template is below.

The image shows a slide titled "Success – WellPoint Success" with a blue header and footer. The footer contains the text "CUSTOMER LOYALTY TEAM • Support You Can Count On" and the SAS logo with the tagline "The Power To Prove." The main content is a bulleted list of success story details:

- Customer: WellPoint
- Department/Division:
- Where were we before:
 - Too much time spent on XXX
 - High probability of error
 - Repetitive manual tasks
- Why SAS:
- Where are we now (Outcome):
 - Point and click:
 - Integrated
 - Reduction in potential for error
 - Significant reduction in time spent on XXX task
 - Automated
- Customer Validation: Director of ?? Said that “ ”
- Added Benefit:

Display 7. Template for SAS Success Stories.

SAS TRAINING

Part of WellPoint's strategy towards broadening employee skills and increasing productivity is providing a variety of training opportunities for its employees. Since there are differences in preferred learning styles and formats, SAS training within WellPoint takes many forms. This includes e-learning purchased from SAS, links to other SAS Institute training, in-house developed CBT training and a series of webinars.

SAS eLEARNING:

SAS eLearning is a web based training package purchased by the WellPoint Business Intelligence Information Management/ Information Technology team and provides 24 hour/7day access to SAS training, e-courses that include comprehensive training with quizzes, demos and practices, e-lectures that include short, pre-recorded lessons on specific topics and SAS certification preparation material. Advantages of eLearning include:

- Internal access to SAS not required – training can be started immediately
- No additional cost
- Learn at your own pace
- 24 hour access to the training
- Multimedia environment
- No travel costs and time away from the office

Currently the following courses are available through SAS eLearning and are geared for novice to intermediate SAS users. Within WellPoint, the preferred interface to SAS is through SAS Enterprise Guide, so that course is of particular value.

- ✓ SAS Programming Introduction: Basic Concepts
- ✓ SAS Programming I: Essentials
- ✓ SAS Programming II: Data Manipulation Techniques
- ✓ SAS Enterprise Guide1: Query and Reporting

CBT TRAINING:

CBT is a self-paced computer-based training through instructor-led, hands-on training delivered in a convenient virtual environment. CBT training eliminates the need for scheduling group instruction around corporate priorities, incorporating many of the same advantages of e-learning. While e-learning is available from SAS, CBT can be customized to offer realistic, on-the-job scenarios which more accurately test employee's skills and responses. CBT has also been shown to increase information retention by participants (Dhanjal & Calis, 1999). CBT ensures consistency of message with measurable outcomes. Four SAS courses are currently available At WellPoint through

CBT training.

- ✓ Creating and Viewing reports with Enterprise Guide
- ✓ Creating and Viewing reports with Add-in for Microsoft Office
- ✓ Creating and Viewing report with Web Report Studio
- ✓ Creating and Viewing OLAP cubes

WEBINAR TRAINING:

In addition to the above options, individual divisions within WellPoint have set up training that is customized for the expectations of that division. Within the Client Analysis & Reporting Services (CARS) division of WellPoint, a series of SAS training webinars have been created to assist in conversion from PC SAS to SAS EG and to support access of the new Teradata data source. The series uses corporate data and databases as part of the training. Here are the initial offerings in this series:

- ✓ Using SAS and SAS/EG: Getting Started
- ✓ Using SAS and SAS/EG: Running SQL Code in SAS
- ✓ Using SAS and SAS/EG: Point and Click EG

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

SAS and WellPoint are planning to work together to create short, single concept recordings for new users that utilize the WellPoint or WellPoint-like data and environment. These short recordings can introduce new and potential users not only to SAS but to SAS within the WellPoint environment. The recordings will be from 5 to 45 minutes in length and will be very specific to a topic. Planned topics include: "What is a Data Step" and "What is a Libname."

CONCLUSION

The WellPoint SAS Community of Practice serves as a valuable support tool for the community of SAS users throughout the company. Through the wiki environment of the SharePoint site, the in-house user group, and the continually updated series of presentations, training and documentation, SAS users within the organization are given opportunity to participate, share and learn regardless of their level of expertise, SAS platform or physical location.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the leaders of the WellPoint SAS in-house user group and the leaders and members of the WellPoint Client Advisory & Reporting Services division for their suggestions and support in producing this paper.

I would also like to thank Jennifer Harney from SAS for her continued support of SAS at WellPoint.

Note: The illustrations in this paper include two very different styles in SAS Community SharePoint look and feel. As this paper was being completed, conversion between the two was in progress but not complete.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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